



Minutes
The Maryland Council for New Americans
The Annie E. Casey Foundation
701 St. Paul Street
Baltimore, MD
May 21, 2009 10:00am -12:00pm

1. Opening Remarks and Welcome

In attendance: Co-Chairs, Secretary Tom Perez and County Executive Isiah Leggett , Martin Ford, Barbara L. Gradet, David Gray, Young-Chan Han, Lenneal J. Henderson, Simone Johnson, Margaret Kim, Irene Lee, Walter Lee, Michael C. Lin, Dominick Murray, Joseph L. Muth, Jr., John Odukoya, Jimmie Walton Paschall, Pamela Paulk, Matt Power, Renee Samuels, Jere Stocks, Wendell Sutton, Gustavo Torres, Jamila Woods-Jones, Adam Ortiz, Angela Lagdameo.

Irene Lee gave a background on the work of the Annie E. Casey Foundation and highlighted the economic development initiatives and reports that have come from the Foundation.

Tom Perez thanked Irene Lee for hosting the Council at the Annie E. Casey Foundation. He recounted his trip with her to review IBEST in Idaho and gave an example of Ibrahim, one student who progressed in one year from not knowing any English to becoming proficient in his scientific field of study. He emphasized that Ibrahim is enrolled in continuing adult education, and the IBEST program is one that could be exported and brought to Maryland.

2. Review of Minutes

The minutes from April 7 were accepted.

3. Report from Workforce Working Group and Council Discussion

Dr. Amjad Riar, Chair

Refer to Preliminary Report.

Discussion points included ways to methodologically drill down on surveys and on looking at Title II Adult Education funding. Michael Fix gave the statistic that 66% of LEP Marylanders have more than a high school degree—which does not gel with the federal standards and the overall national picture. Irene suggested that it was essential to match skill sets and resumes for focus on skilling up and providing career pathways. Dr. Amjad Riar mentioned a third party of credentialing for physicians used by 40 states.

The Council also discussed profiles of those in need of credentialing. Pastor John Odukoya talked about engineers who suffer from time lapses of transcripts and from contending with a cumbersome process. Dr. Lenneal Henderson gave examples of “some of the most competent” foreign-trained faculty who contribute but do not have the credentials to remain. Father John Muth talked about the fear that immigrants face. He also gave an example of a congregant who applied for a Greencard in 1987, was a high community contributor, named Foster Mother of the Year, and only recently received her Greencard.

Recommendations from the Council: Secretary Perez wants to see a better sense of the supply of workers. Odukoya was interested in more information on labor certification. Rev. Jamila Woods-Jones inquired about ways to work with a sending country to confront the “two-way hang-up”. Perez mentioned that there are navigator models (ex: one-stop shops) to look into. He wanted evidenced-based models for decision making and wants to move from being physician-focused to include other professions.

4. Report from Citizenship Working Group and Council Discussion

Gustavo Torres, Chair

Refer to Preliminary Report.

The Council had inquiries regarding funding. County Executive Isiah Leggett wanted to know if the Working Group had looked into a foundation to help fund the recommendations. Gustavo Torres responded that the Illinois model used public and private funding. Irene Lee emphasized the need to look at a wider population for a blended funding stream. Leggett underscored that the \$675.00 application cost is prohibitive. Torres said that there is a national campaign to reduce the fees.

Fix said that changes on the citizenship test are happening.

Recommendations from the Council: Prioritize recommendations (Leggett). Irene Lee wanted the Working Group to look at Massachusetts how to reduce citizenship backlog from 16-18 months to a wait time of 4 ½ months. Perez also wanted the Working Group to look into installment fees for citizenship. Fix said it would be an easy win for Maryland to push for USCIS to monitor denial rates.

5. Report from Financial Services Working Group and Council Discussion

Robin McKinney (on behalf of Olive Akhigbe, Chair)

Refer to Preliminary Report.

The Council discussed different types of financial scams. Leggett mentioned that there is financial exploitation in the microloan program. Robin McKinney said that other scams happened with mortgage lending and tax preparation. Data shows that the hurtful scams

have been inflicted on Spanish speaking on Spanish speaking, African American on African American, and minority on minority populations (Perez).

Odukoya inquired if there was a role that Embassies could play to establish acceptable identification.

Recommendations from the Council: Bring the appendices of Best Practices (p. 33) to the forefront and begin speaking with local organizations for potential partnership with the State in a strategic way (Perez/McKinney). Get more data on microloan scams, mortgage lending scams, tax fraud, mortgage fraud (Leggett/Perez).

6. Report from Governmental Access Working Group and Council Discussion

Anna White, (on behalf of Kien Lee, Chair)

Refer to Preliminary Report.

Discussion ensued over best practices and immigrant distrust. Irene Lee/Fix mentioned that the NY Mayor's Office is a solid program that has a high degree of accountability and tracks data well.

Fix said that Tennessee Immigrant Refugee Rights and Littleton, CO received MPI awards; both programs emphasized Welcome Centers. Irene Lee said there is a difference between Welcome Centers and Welcome Back Centers.

Executive Director of the Hispanic Commission, Ruby Stemmle, talked about government's willingness to serve, but there is a lack of trained professionals in cultural competence. Pastor Walter Lee mentioned that the Government Access Working Group is not only looking at language, but also promoting "understanding the mentality" of immigrants.

Recommendations from Council: Table discussion of structure of the Council. Look into NY, CO, TN programs as models for possible initiatives in MD.

OTHER OVERALL REPORT RECOMEMNDATIONS from the Council:

Gustavo/Irene Lee talked about the importance of including a discussion of the Census in the final report. Henderson wants a cross-cutting "context" section which talks about census, fiscal constraints, and immigration reform. Pamela Paulk said there should be a low-cost/medium-cost/high-cost gradient of recommendations. Perez agreed and encouraged the Council to not be constrained since we will come out of the recession.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:00pm